

Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of April 14, 2009

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Voting Members Present

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing New England Development
William P. Farley	Town of Somerset
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
R. Mallory Starr (Vice Chair)	Somerset House Management Association

Non-Voting Members Present

TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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Absent

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Gregory Knoop	Oudens Knoop Knoop + Sachs Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
Jessica Moore	The JBG Companies
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
David Viertels	EagleBank (Employer of fewer than 50)
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

Guests

Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
Afua Ofori	Polinger Shannon & Luchs (for Mary Herman)

Items 1,2,3 – Introductions, Review Approval of the March minutes, Chair's Comments. Members and guests introduced themselves.

Chair Robert Schwarzbart thanked **Jim Carlson** for producing detailed minutes of the March meeting, which included a presentation from **Councilmember Mark Elrich** and an information update from **Philip McLaughlin**, Ride On Transit Planner.

The minutes from the March meeting were approved with one correction – **David Glass** did not attend the March meeting but was included as an attendee.

Mr. Schwarzbart stated that the Village of Friendship Heights is nearing the end of its sidewalks and roadways improvement program and is now installing brick paved crosswalks at certain intersections. Replacement of the brick crosswalks was potentially at odds with a recent Council bill seeking a ban on certain types of pavers. **Mr.**

Schwarzbart called on **Julian Mansfield**, Friendship Heights Village Manager, to provide further information on the repaving program.

Mr. Mansfield stated that a Council Staff memo recommended that there not be a county wide ban on brick pavers, but instead to enforce the Park & Planning “Bethesda” standard for all future projects. The Bethesda standard calls for bricks with slip-resistant surfaces to be set in concrete, very tightly joined at the edges. The experience with these kinds of brick pavers has been very positive for Bethesda, Silver Spring and other urban districts.

Mr. Mansfield stated that the crosswalk projects are expected to be completed by early May, depending on weather.

Mr. Schwarzbart stated that a large number of Senior SmarTrip cards were sold at the Friendship Heights Village Center. Metro representatives were available during the Community Day Celebration. Metro was also available on March 12 to sell the cards.

Mr. Schwarzbart announced that there would be four distinguished speakers in the coming weeks at the Village Center; the events will take place each Thursday evening. The appearances are free of charge and open to the public.

- April 16 / 7:30 pm: **Thomas Ricks**, the Washington Post Sr. Pentagon Correspondent, will discuss his book, “The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008.”
- April 23 / 7:30 pm: **Aaron David Miller**, an advisor to six Secretaries of State, will discuss his book, “The Much Too Promised Land: America’s Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace.”
- April 30 / 7:00 pm: **James A. Thurber**, University Distinguished Professor of Government, founder and Director of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University, and frequent news analyst will discuss the accomplishments and challenges of the Obama Administration.
- May 7 / 7:30 pm: **Anne Lewis**, former political adviser to the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign, Political Director of the Democratic National Committee and Director of Communications for President Bill Clinton and the Clinton-Gore Re-Election Campaign, will discuss the impact of changing media and new technologies on presidential campaigns; voter contact and fund-raising; and the re-emergence of person-to-person communication.

Item 4 – Invitation to Councilmember Nancy Floreen: **Mr. Schwarzbart** called the committee’s attention to a letter in the meeting packet sent April 6 to **Councilmember Floreen**, inviting her to attend a future TMD Advisory Committee meeting. **Mr. Carlson** added that he had been in touch with **Ms. Floreen’s** staff about attending the present meeting, but Council was scheduled to meet with this morning with **Congressman Chris Van Hollen**.

Mr. Schwarzbart noted that since she is Chair of the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment (T&E) Committee, **Ms. Floreen’s** input would be of particular value to the Advisory Committee, given the TMD mission. For example, it would be interesting to hear her address the proposed budget cuts and how they might affect transit service.

Item 5 – Response from DDOT re: Jenifer St.-Western Ave. Intersection: **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that on January 23rd, the committee voted to send a letter to **Jeffrey Jennings**, Ward 3 Transportation Planner, recommending a striped crosswalk from the Western Avenue curb next to Lord & Taylor, across from the entrance to GEICO, and also a letter recommending changes to the turning patterns on Jenifer Street. DDOT accepted the committee’s recommendation to replace the current left turn/straight through lane and mandatory right turn lane configuration on Jenifer to a mandatory left turn only lane and right turn/straight through lane

configuration. This is set forth in Item 5 in the packet, a letter from **Jeffrey Marootian**, Customer Service Program Officer for DDOT.

Mr. McCloskey asked if DDOT responded to the request for a crosswalk at the GEICO Western Avenue entrance. **Mr. Carlson** said there had been no response yet on that request, but he would check with DDOT.

Mr. Carlson added that as regards the lane change recommendation for Jenifer, there is a 30-day comment period during which the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 3E can weigh in on the proposed change.

Item 6 – Member Absences: **Mr. Carlson** called members' attention to the enclosed Item 6, "Policies and Procedures for Citizen Boards, Committees and Commissions." The Attendance section states that, for committees meeting monthly, like the TMD Advisory Committee, members are allowed up to three absences; and you cannot have three consecutive absences. In either instance – more than 3 absences throughout the year or 3 consecutive absences, it is cause for removal from the committee.

Mr. Carlson added that committee members' absences have at times limited committee action because there was no quorum for a formal vote. County rules prohibit voting by email; therefore committee members are required to be in face-to-face meetings when business is to be transacted. **Mr. Carlson** said that moving forward with future meetings, members who are absent over the allowed limit will receive reminder letters and will be removed from the committee. **Mr. Carlson** will send a general information letter to all members.

Mr. Schwarzbart added that there have been instances when a vote could not be taken due to lack of a quorum, making the committee less effective and less representative. He extended thanks and recognition to the members who could attend the present meeting, and asked that everyone cooperate with the attendance rules.

Mr. Carlson said that the Policies and Procedures also direct him to distribute reimbursement forms at each meeting. Committee members are reimbursed for travel and dependent care expenses (\$10/travel; \$30/dependent care). Receipts are not required. Forms will be submitted quarterly.

Mr. Carlson said that several members were eligible for second terms and would have to submit a letter of intent (can be an email) and updated resume to the County Executive's Office should they desire to serve a second 3-year term. Some slots require a nomination by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber or a community organization, while others can self-nominate.

Mr. Carlson added that members whose terms have expired are obligated to remain on the committee as voting members until a replacement is officially confirmed by Council.

Going forward, prospective committee members should be interviewed to gauge the level of interest and commitment, and to determine if candidates would be able to fulfill the once per month obligation. Committee members agreed that **Mr. Carlson** could conduct a short phone interview.

Mallory Starr added that he had a telephone interview with a Council member for his position in addition to speaking with a committee member.

Mr. Schwarzbart said prospective or incoming members could simply be advised of the attendance policy in a letter or other written materials in a packet of information, such as the one he received. An interview would not serve a constructive purpose, since most members are nominated by other bodies.

Mr. Carlson added that an interview would apply to those members not nominated by other organizations.

David Glass stated that instead of a formal interview it may be more appropriate for **Mr. Carlson** to speak to nominees directly or on the phone and advise them at that time of the attendance requirements. **Mr. Schwarzbart** agreed with that suggestion and said this was the process he followed when Laura Chin recruited him for the committee.

April Birnbaum said it is also helpful for prospective members to attend meetings ahead of time, which is what she did prior to her nomination.

VOTE: The committee voted on the question of whether an interview should be conducted of prospective members. The vote to interview candidates was defeated. **Mr. Carlson** will instead advise prospective members of the committee's purpose and attendance requirements.

Mr. Carlson said he was advised by the County Executive's Office that **David Viertels'** had resigned his position at EagleBank, leaving another opening on the committee. The B-CC Chamber will nominate a replacement. **Mr. Carlson** will follow up.

Item 7 – Other Business: **Mr. Carlson** announced that Commuter Services has implemented an on line TMP reporting system. To date, nine TMP Annual Reports have been received, eight have been approved. The Annual Reports are a look back at the past year to see how employers have fulfilled the required elements of the plan:

1. Have a designated contact person
2. Post & distribute information on transit, pooling and other commuting alternatives
3. Facilitate TMD staff presentations on a periodic basis
4. Provide Guaranteed Ride Home information
5. Participate in the Annual Commuter Survey with a good faith effort to achieve an 80 percent return rate
6. Provide ADA information
7. Have a permanent display area for transit information
8. Compile information on yearly TMP activities and submit an Annual Report

The County is exploring possible enforcement for those employers that refuse to comply. It is a misdemeanor punishable by fine. No enforcement action has been taken so far, but is likely in the future. **Mr. Carlson** added that the overwhelming majority of companies comply, with very few – perhaps a handful in the County – that actually refuse to comply. In most cases, companies simply fall behind and miss filing deadlines because of competing priorities and heavy workloads. There are no companies in Friendship Heights that are refusing to comply.

Mr. Carlson announced that the regional Bike To Work Day event will be on May 15th. There are pit stops in Bethesda, North Bethesda, Silver Spring and Rockville. Registration is on line at waba.org (Washington Area Bicyclists Association).

William Farley asked if CSS promotes bicycling. **Mr. Carlson** said that staff regularly promotes bicycling to employers as part of its package of transportation alternatives.

Bill McCloskey said he was asked by a neighbor to discuss the traffic light that controls exiting traffic at GEICO on Western Avenue, directly across the street from Lord & Taylor. The light operates 24 hours per day even when GEICO employees are not at work and is not in synch with the Jenifer Avenue light, creating bottlenecks. **Mr. Carlson** said he will follow up with DDOT to see if it can flash at non-peak hours.

ACTION ITEM: **April Birnbaum** asked if the committee was going to take a position on Councilmember Elrich's Bus Rapid Transit proposal. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said the committee could discuss and bring it to a vote at the next meeting.

Len Grant distributed an article referring to the County's efforts to secure bids for car sharing companies to operate in public garages in Bethesda, North Bethesda, Wheaton and Silver Spring, but no mention of Friendship Heights. **Mr. Carlson** stated there are no public parking facilities in Friendship Heights and the RFP is specific that the service be available in public garages.

Mr. Grant said that it does not appear to exclude on-street parking, however, so that may be a viable option the County should consider. Since car sharing is meant to augment public transportation facilities, and Friendship Heights is a major transit hub, it should be looked at as an option.

Mr. Schwarzbart added that the County could perhaps negotiate something with the private garages.

Mr. Glass noted that during the car sharing presentation, **Ms. Perez** (Zipcar General Mgr.) made the point of saying that it is a demand-driven process. Before Zipcar establishes itself in an area, surveys are done to gauge the level of interest and demand.

Ms. Birnbaum added that there currently is a Zipcar available in the parking lot behind MeiWah. **Mr. Mansfield** noted that there is an additional Zipcar space near Western Avenue.

Mr. Carlson said car sharing is a key element of the County's negotiations with developers in putting together traffic mitigation agreements; in addition, car sharing is promoted as one of the elements in employer traffic mitigation plans.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM
Next meeting date: May 12, 2009